Other tracks reach out to Saugus

By TIM HADDOCK
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SAUGUS — Surrounding racetracks are preparing to accommodate the overflow of drivers created by the sudden Saugus Speedway closing Wednesday.

Mesa Marin Raceway, Willow Springs International Raceway and Kern County Raceway have been receiving phones calls constantly since Wednesday afternoon from drivers inquiring about rules, registration and vehicle specifications.

"We hate to see any racetrack close, especially Saugus," said Jack Long, director of competition at Mesa Marin in Bakersfield. "It's so rich in tradition. We'll do our best to accommodate them."

"Since we heard about it last night, the phones have been ringing and ringing. We know we're going to get some of their overflow," Chris Huth of Willow Springs in Rosamond said. "I'm really sorry it's closing. I've been going there since I was a kid. It's a real shame."

"Our phones started ringing about 3 o'clock yesterday and they haven't stopped," said Ron Hall, director of operations at Kern County Raceway. "Every class we run is a copy of Saugus."

All three tracks race Street Stock, Grand American Modifieds and some form of Late Model class and Pure Stocks.

The Late Model class at all three tracks is called Pro Modifieds, which has a heavier engines and metal, rather than fiberglass, frames.

Kern County Raceway in Rosamond runs Pro Stock cars with metal or fiberglass frames together. Rick Crow, who raced Grand Ams last season and Late Models this year at Saugus, has raced at Kern County frequently in 1995.

Saugus graduate Sean Woodside has called Mesa Marin inquiring about racing his Super Late Model car in their Sportsman class.

All three tracks also considered continuing the points races at Saugus, which abruptly and anticlimactically ended with the closing of the track, but each had his reservations about doing so.

Huth would continue the races only if the Saugus Speedway drivers wanted to run separate races.

Long said his schedule is too full to fit in another division into the track's agenda.

"We really don't have a place to fit them in," Long said. "We run four divisions every night. It's real tough to fit them in."

Saugus Speedway track promoter Ray Wilkings announced the closing of the track Wednesday because of structural damage to the grandstand.

Instead of repairing the damage, the track owners, the Bonelli family, decided to eliminate racing at Saugus Speedway.

Wilkings said the swap meet and other special events, like Kart racing, would continue.